

A Comparison of DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

1. *Basic Definitions*

Land Use Designation: A planning and policy tool set in the Comprehensive Plan and used by a government to establish categories defining how specific parcels of land can be used.

- In the East Renton Plateau, **King County's land use designation** is Urban Residential – medium density, which allows 4 – 12 homes per gross acre. This means that no fewer than 4 residential housing units per acre can be permitted here (R-4), and no more than 12 units per acre will be allowed. King County zoning allows attached dwellings (such as apartments and multi-family housing). Renton zoning does not allow any attached housing. The City of Renton will not provide sewer service for any type of use except for single-family residential units in this area.
- **Renton's land use designation** is Residential Low Density, which allows a minimum of 1 dwelling unit per ten acres for resource lands (R-1), up to a maximum of 4 dwellings units per net acre.

Zoning: A regulation that implements and is consistent with a specific land use designation. It provides the specific standards regulating how property is developed. In case of East Renton, if a person wants to develop in the area, the King County base zoning is R-4. Renton has three potential zones that could be applied upon future annexation to portions of the East Renton Plateau: R-4, R-1, and Resource Conservation. An area must have environmental constraints, equestrian facilities, pervasive infrastructure deficits and/or significant resource lands be designated at densities lower than 4 homes per net acre.

2. *How King County and Renton Calculate What Can Be Built*

- King County allows development based on gross density: (Total parcel acreage x zoning) + Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) or Residential Density Incentives (RDI) of up to 50% above what is allowed by the base zoning = Number of houses allowed.
- Renton allows development based on net Density: (Total parcel acreage – wetlands, roads, etc.) x zoning = Number of houses allowed.

Transfer of Development Rights: A King County program allowing a property owner in the rural area (outside the Urban Growth Boundary) to sell the right to develop their property. In exchange, they leave their parcel in a natural state forever, and this commitment is recorded on their deed. A developer then can use the TDR on top of the base zoning on another property inside the Urban Growth Boundary, and gets to build more houses where they would otherwise not be allowed.

3. An Example

Using a recent subdivision in East Renton Plateau as an example the number of houses that could be allowed under King County versus Renton development regulations are:

	King County (gross density)	Renton (net density)
Number of acres	11.6	$11.6 - 3.5 = 8.1$ (Adjusted for roads, wetlands, etc.)
x Zoning Calculation	(x 4 units/acre) = 46.4	(x 4 units/acre) = 32.4
+ TDR or RDI Credit	$11.6 \times 2 = 23.2$	0
Total houses allowed	69.6	32.4

4. If Renton's Zoning is Supposed to Result in Lower Density than the County's, What Happened on 128th Avenue SE?

First, some of the development along 128th was already vested using the King County regulations. Due to differences in gross and net density, as well as smaller lot sizes and building setbacks, projects started in King County usually achieve a higher density. Once an application is made, the regulations at the time of application stay throughout the development project.

However, some of the development occurred under Renton regulations as well. Portions of the area already annexed were planned as part of the Renton's Comprehensive Plan for higher density single-family subdivisions surround the commercial area to provide housing and a lifestyle where people can walk to services. The planned density decreases along the NE 4th/128th corridor as you move east. The area immediately adjacent to the commercial areas (next to QFC) has medium-density land use in the Comprehensive Plan and R-10 zoning (10 du/net acre). This zoning replaced multi-family zoning (R-18) in King County upon annexation. The area farther east is developed with several new subdivisions with single-family land use and R-8 zoning. This is the zoning that Renton has in most of its residential areas throughout the city. The portions of the Plateau with this land use designation are mostly now annexed and in the process of development. The last new housing area already in the City limits (Maureen Heights and Amberwood) was developed under R-5 zoning.

In 2004, the City did an extensive review of the development occurring in this area in response to public concerns that the quality did not meet the vision and direction of the Comprehensive Plan. Several major changes were made in the R-10 and R-8 zones to require larger lot sizes and get better landscaping. In addition, Renton eliminated the R-5 zone last year and adopted a new zoning classification for the East Renton Plateau that limits development to a maximum of 4 houses per net acre, compared to the 6 houses per gross acre that are currently allowed by King County. Nothing has yet been developed under these regulations.

5. How much time and cost is it to get a permit in Renton vs. King County?

There are hundreds of answers to that question depending what the development project is. Using an example of adding a 10' x 20' deck to an existing house, a homeowner could expect the following time and costs:

King County has site-specific permit processes:

- If the house is on sewer and water and there are no wetlands, slopes, or sensitive areas, and the deck is right at ground level, it is possible to get a permit the same day for \$381.
- If the house has the same conditions but the deck will be above ground level, the permit takes two to three weeks to obtain for an estimated \$586.
- If the house is on septic or well systems with no sensitive areas, the Department of Health must approve the permit (two to six weeks for \$285) and then apply for Department of Development and Environmental Services (DDES) permits, above.
- If the property has sensitive areas, additional approval from the Department of Health must be given, which can take anywhere from 6 – 20 weeks, depending on the backlog of applications. The range of cost from this permit is \$1000 - \$3500, and then the DDES permits would need to be sought.

In **Renton**, the project would need to meet the residential zoning and setback requirements (minimum distance between all structures and property lines). If the deck is less than 30 inches tall, no permit is required. If the deck is more than 30 inches tall, the permit time would be 2 – 3 weeks and cost \$196.31.